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McHUGH EXPERT INTERVIEW

Libraries and Publishers:
An Interview with Katina Strauch, *Against the Grain*

In this interview we will get insights into the mindset of an important customer segment of the U.S. publishing industry, librarians and the library market. We will interview Katina Strauch, the editor and publisher of *Against the Grain* (ATG, **http://www.against-the-grain.com**), a bi-monthly newsletter with contributions from librarians, content aggregators, technical experts, publishers, and lawyers.

Q How would you characterize the acceptance of eBooks in the library community? Some special librarians tell me their patrons still prefer print copies of books, and therefore order both the paper and digital. What is your sense of digital vs. printed books for libraries? What does the future hold for eBooks and librarians?

A eBooks in the United States have not met with the acceptance (at least in academic libraries) that they have in some other countries, for example Hong Kong. This was generally attributed to a lack of a critical mass. The latest Bowker Annual (now *Library and Book Trade Almanac*) statistics on the number of net eBooks sold is 7,339,000, with a growth rate of 57.8% for the period 2002-2008. This is in sharp contrast to the number of print books being published 22,032,580. In my library, we have 200,000 eBooks. Their use is marginal, however. Over time, I am sure that eBooks will become more and more accepted and used.

Many are drawing the parallel with the acceptance of ejournals. I do not think that this is a realistic parallel. Books are different from journals. Generally, a book should be viewed as a package, whereas journals are easily separated into free-standing, individual articles.

eBooks are good for searching the fulltext content for a particular concept or word, but to view the entire book, printing is generally necessary.

I have had many experiences with patrons of all ages and 99% of them have said that they prefer print books. In fact, just yesterday I was having lunch with a professor and asked if he was using the new set of eBooks that we had just purchased in his subject area. He said, and I quote: "I hate the eBook. It takes too long to download and is very cumbersome. Plus I need my reading device with me to access it."

Of course, the technologies and interfaces will get better. And, there are different categories of books. Fiction may be more readable as an eBook and there has been some acceptance of these kinds of materials through devices like the Kindle. Reference books that are accessed for the fact or tidbit of information contained there have had more acceptance as eBooks. It is interesting that textbooks have not taken off as eBooks despite the fact that many textbooks are not easily portable. Still, the academic scholarly monograph does not lend itself to transmittal exclusively as an eBook. I think that the print book will remain viable beyond our lifetime and longer. Frankly, I don't think that the eBook will ever completely replace the print book.

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Q What is the status of archiving methodology of journals? Where are we now in the development of a dependable archiving methodology? Are paper archives a thing of the past? Have any "preferred" providers evolved now who are widely accepted by the library community? What future developments do you anticipate in archiving methodology?

A The question is, are we talking about current journals, born digital journals, websites? There is no clear and consistent plan on archiving of electronic materials. In the journals category, there is more activity out there

with Portico and LOCKSS, CLOCKSS and others. There are also publishers who state that they are archiving. This reminds me of the many times that I have visited publishing companies (especially back in the days when there was only print) and asked to see their back issues of materials or books which they published. On the whole, publishers have not been eager to keep a backfile of their publications, especially those publications that are not selling well. This takes up space and with the Thor Power Tool decision regarding inventories, has tax implications. It is encouraging that in the new electronic marketplace publishers are becoming more conscious of keeping their backfiles of materials since in most cases the backfile is marketable. Still, when it's a matter of financial viability or a sale to another company, archiving is not the main driver. It's cost.

And what can realistically be archived in the digital environment? I can change my Facebook page second-to-second, websites disappear frequently, not all URLs are persistent. In the final analysis, print is the best archive. I do not think that we should be discarding print that we have already paid for for space or any other reason. The next generations of humanity will not stand us in good stead.

Q Open access has been at the forefront of the information/publishing business. Publishers' concern is that open access could undermine the subscription model and thereby hurt the economics of journal publishing, particularly for the nonprofit societies and associations. How does the library community view open access? What developments in the future do you anticipate for open access?

A Here is where publishers and librarians diverge. Librarians like open access. They think all information should be free. This is a worthy Utopian concept but it is unrealistic. In the world as we are living now, someone or something has to pay to produce and keep/store information.

I don't think that open access undermines the subscription model necessarily, but it's a matter of the organization of all the information out there and being able to access that information. Currently, I can publish an article in a journal, I can put it up on my website, and I can put it in the institutional repository, to name just a few possibilities. Which version of my paper is the "correct" version and how do I find it? I do not think that open access is good for the community without some delineation and agreement on these key issues.

Q Many librarians contend that publishers' digital rights management (DRM) can be a real pain. Librarians respect copyright and the need to protect intellectual property. However, providing patrons with detailed instructions on how to navigate the DRM can be a hassle. What suggestions do you have for publishers when it comes to DRM?

Some think that copyright needs to be abolished and are against Digital Rights Management systems. I agree that DRM systems are generally a pain. They need to get less cumbersome, but trying to merge different publishers and different rights on different platforms is not a simple process. As long as we have copyright and different publishing solutions to it and we agree that intellectual property should be protected, we will have DRM systems or some equivalent. I hope that these systems will become more workable as the years progress and technology becomes even more sophisticated. I would urge publishers to work to make DRM more flexible and user-friendly. This is a big barrier in the use of eBooks.

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Q   Librarians want better network licenses and more affordable licenses. Do you have any suggestions for publishers on the subject of network licenses? What improvement in network licenses are librarians looking for?

A   First, let's define network licenses. Are you talking about licensing databases/journals/books for viewing by more than one user? Librarians don't like to pay more for different users to access the same thing. Why should my library pay for 10,000 students to access Medieval History Journal, for example, when we only have five majors in that category? Pricing of access over networks is in its infancy at this point. It must become more customized, sophisticated and refined, and scalable in order for librarians to accept it and for publishers to achieve the market share that they need to survive.

The fact that we now purchase access rather than product has created many legal and administrative hurdles for all of us. SERU and model license agreements are a start. How about a uniform license agreement for all things digital (or categories of things digital) that we license?

Q   How do librarians view print-on-demand (POD) article services? What have they found about POD that is beneficial? What improvements would they like to see in POD from publishers?

A   Like user-defined ordering, print-on-demand is definitely receiving a lot of attention from librarians these days. With budget cuts, the "just in time" approach is receiving much more discussion than the "just in case" approach. "Just in time" is now the politically correct approach. The drawback to POD is that it's open-ended. You don't know how to budget for this. Some libraries are getting around this by allocating a certain amount for POD and generally not budging from the amount budgeted. No doubt, this is an approach that we will see continue to grow as library budgets are cut back.

Q   What are your thoughts on "just in case" versus "just in time"?

A   It's a no brainer that "just in time" is the approach of necessity in times when budgets are stretched. And there are many, many, many more products to purchase (lease is the operative word now) than there were in 1980 when I became an acquisitions librarian. (A sidebar here: Back in 1980 we had 3,600 journal titles, now we have over 45,000 electronic journals plus 3,000 print titles. And we are leasing many more items than we are actually purchasing.)

I am concerned with the rush for us all to go electronic and to discard many print books and journals because of space considerations. You will remember Nicholson Baker and his book Double Fold, which took many well-known librarians to task for discarding print newspapers for microform. While I don't necessarily agree with Mr. Baker's perspective, this discussion delineates important issues. How will decisions that we are making now in 2010 be perceived by those who follow us in 2075 or 2110? We are doing our best to digitize hidden collections in our special collections departments. At the same time we are discarding print in place of electronic on all fronts. And most of us have no real plans to preserve the electronic content that we are leasing. I am not so much saying that this is wrong as I am saying that we ought to be talking more intently about this and thinking about it collectively as a profession. And, this is not a big research library issue. All libraries should be having this discussion and should be agreeing to preserve print archives of some sort in consortia agreements. Some publishers have joined in and I would encourage publishers to assure archiving of their content in libraries.

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Q   How have the roles of librarians, vendors, and publishers changed over the last 10 years?

A   See above! The roles have changed dramatically. According to the book, A Chronology of Librarianship, ten years ago (2000), 62 million people (about ¼ of the U.S. population) were using the Internet; a survey concluded that "book buyers who also use the Internet don't believe that electronic books will replace the paper kind." Elsevier Science acquired Endeavor Information Systems, JSTOR had 124 journals in 16 disciplines, the Library Corporation purchased CARL. There were an estimated 66,000 publishers in the U.S. The monograph unit price had risen 66 percent. The average cost for a U.S. periodical was $241.54.

Contrast this with 2009. 227,719,000 people, 74.1% of the U.S. population (see **www.internetworldstats.com/top20,**htm) are Internet users. Elsevier Science has sold Endeavor Information systems which is now owned by ExLibris, JSTOR currently has 1,756 titles in 23 disciplines. In addition, JSTOR/ITHAKA has also recently announced their current scholarship program for current title subscriptions. The average cost for a US periodical is $467.82. The average book price is $83.71 (hardcover, includes titles costing over $81).

Q   How can content aggregators better serve their library customers?

A   Customization of collections is necessary. Many of us are purchasing the same content from many different aggregators. This is annoying to end- users and expensive for libraries.

I wonder if it would be possible for various publishers to partner together to make collections in specific subject areas available for a fee? This would be good for the end user and the library because like subject material from different publishers would be bundled together automatically.

Q   Google has evolved as a key research tool for librarians and patrons over the last few years. How should publishers work with Google to increase the effectiveness of Google as a powerful search tool for library patrons?

A   I don't think I can give an intelligent answer to this question. Google and publishers are businesses. Google is the "elephant in the room." I think that Google needs to be more conscious of publishers and the financial environment(s) they operate in. Google has not won publisher friends with several of its recent policies.

I was noticing on Google's website that Google News currently gets articles by crawling online news sites. They say that they are unable to manually add an individual article or press release to their index. Is this something that publishers should lobby for?

Q   What is your opinion of the continuing trend of consolidation in the publishing business? How do librarians view this trend? Is there a fear that there could be one big publisher dominating the information business?

A   On April 1, 2009, the clever Phil Davis published a spoof. A single, publicly-held company called Springer-Elsevier-Wiley-Blackwell, or SPEW for short, was to be confirmed by the U.S. Department of Justice and the European Commission. SPEW "will represent the largest publisher merger in history, representing 63% of all scientific journals and consuming 99% of library budgets." I hate to generalize for librarians, but librarians generally don't like consolidation. Consolidation limits competition for pricing and content and flattens the marketplace. And consolidation usually leads to price increases.

http://scholarlykitchen.sspnet.org/2009/04/01/mergers-create-uber-publisher

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Q   What three major trends do you see affecting librarians and the library market over the next five years?

• Mobile computing and delivery of content

• Consortial collection development

• Customization of content

Q   What thoughts do you want publishers to take away from our interview?

It's a mad, mad, mad, mad world out there! Seriously. There was an article in the March 16, 2010 issue of the *New York Times* ("Fending Off Digital Decay, Bit by Bit") that pointed out the issues with electronically produced files in varieties of formats and how they can/will be preserved for scholars in the future. The article dealt largely with archival materials given to libraries by famous authors. I hope that publishers (with the help of library and special collections colleagues) will continue to look seriously at archiving content for the long term. I just filled out a survey from Oxford University Press about digital preservation. Libraries and publishers and archivists must collaborate to assure that important records and artifacts of our civilization are not lost for future generations.

Q   What is the Charleston Conference? When is it held? What is its purpose? Who should attend?

The Charleston Conference is designed for academic librarians who purchase or lease library materials, scholarly publishers and aggregators to that market, and vendors and consultants to that market. We have a growing number of library school students and always have special librarians and librarians from large public libraries who attend. The Conference takes place every year in beautiful historic Charleston, SC, the first or second week of November, depending on hotel availability. The Conference is called Issues in Book and Serial Acquisition and has a unique subtext every year. This year, the theme is "Anything Goes."

2010 will be our 30th Conference. The Charleston Conference began in 1980 as a gathering of acquisitions and collection development types to discuss issues of importance to them. There were 20 attendees. Last year we had nearly 1,100 attendees. Visit us at **www.katina.info/conference**.

Q   How does one submit an article to ATG?

We have a website — **www.against-the-grain.com** and you can submit an article through the website. You can also email me **kstrauch@comcast.net** or one of the editors if you have an idea for an article or a group of articles on a particular theme or subject. We love to hear from possible authors. Our focus is on acquisitions and collection development. We are listed in many directories and in several of the online Cabell's Directories. **www.cabells.com**

Q   How does one subscribe to ATG?

Subscription information is on our website – **www.against-the-grain.com**. A print subscription is required for electronic access. Rates are very reasonable ($50 U.S., $60 Canada, $85 foreign, all rates are in USDollars). We publish six issues a year (February, April, June, September, November, December/January) and each issue is generally 88 pages in length. The ATG News Channel is developing. Current issue content is available online to current subscribers and a selected number of back issue articles are also available. The News Channel also publishes some news releases, announcements, and articles that will not be printed in the print version.

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Against the Grain (ISSN: 1043-2094) is your key to the latest news about libraries, publishers, book jobbers, and subscription agents. It is a unique collection of reports on the issues, literature, and people that impact the world of books and journals. ATG is published on paper six times a year, in February, April, June, September, and November and December/January.
www.against-the-grain.com

ABOUT KATINA STRAUCH

Katina Strauch is the Head Librarian, Collection Development at the College of Charleston (SC) Libraries. She is responsible for acquisition and collection development operations relating to the book collections, serials, microforms, government documents, electronic resources, and binding. She received her Bachelor degree in Economics from the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill in 1969 and her Masters in Library Science from UNC-CH in 1972.   Katina is the founder of the internationally acclaimed annual Charleston Conference (1980), Against the Grain (1989), The Charleston Report (1996), and The Charleston Advisor (1999). In 2005, she received a Presidential appointment to the Board of the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) which is still in force. Katina has won several awards: the UNC-CH SILS Outstanding Alumni Award (1992), Outstanding Librarian of South Carolina (1996), Outstanding Acquisitions Librarian (ALA, ALCTS, AS), (1997), Louis Shores-Greenwood Publishing Group Award (ALA RUSA) (2007).

ABOUT JOHN B. MCHUGH, PUBLISHING CONSULTANT

John B. "Jack" McHugh, a 30-year veteran of the publishing business, is a successful publishing consultant. He is the author of the *McHugh Publishing Management Series*—80 practical publications on all aspects of publications management, which are available free at **www.johnbmchugh.com** .

In the book publishing business, McHugh has worked as an executive for Houghton Mifflin, Wadsworth, and Saint Mary's Press. McHugh is also an experienced association-publishing executive. For seven years, he was Publisher and Director of Programs at the American Society for Quality, a 100,000-member professional association based in Milwaukee, WI. For a two-year period, McHugh served as the Interim Publisher at the Project Management Institute, a Newtown Square, PA. based, 240,000 -member professional association.

Jack McHugh's specialties include book publishing, executive recruiting, journal publishing, rights and permissions, organizational design, and startups. McHugh has advised a variety of association publishers including: Alliance for Children and Families, ASCD, ASTM, AWHONN, Boy Scouts of America, International Employee Benefit Foundation, NSTA, Police Executive Research Foundation, SAE, SMACNA and SNAME.

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